INVESTING IN TALENT:
How Octo Built a Culture of Continuous Learning

AT A GLANCE

Challenges

- Lacked a repeatable process for training and development
- Needed to empower its employees to better support clients

Results

- 287% increase in overall Skill Profiles
- 1,100+ hours of training complete
- 225+ exams passed

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"We chose Cloud Academy based on the ease of use, the curated content within learning paths, and the ability to create our own custom content for our employees to consume. With all of the admin features available to us, we're able to easily manage progress and track the results of our training."

James Farley
Vice President of Enterprise Solutions at Octo

CHALLENGES

In years past, the Octo team had run a number of ad-hoc and utilitarian training initiatives — with everything from job shadowing to just-in-time training to live sessions. As the team grew and matured from 50 to 300 to now well over 1,000 employees, Octo needed a repeatable process for training and development — one which supported a continual learning model. The company established a strategic planning effort to enhance learning management, training, and professional development.

James Farley, VP of Enterprise Solutions at Octo, formally established "Octo University," which serves as an internal hub for all things training and development. The kickoff included internal Scaled Agile Framework Training (SAFe™), AWS Cloud Practitioner training, and a PMI-based PMP bootcamp, but there was a need for a unified platform to enhance the technical skills of Octo's employees.

According to James, "We wanted to get to something that was more programmatic, with a true online learning management system where we could easily track the skills of our employees."

The goal was not just to implement a means for professional development, but to help establish a culture of continual learning. Before partnering with Cloud Academy, James and his senior technical staff evaluated a number of different vendors including Udemy, A Cloud Guru, and Pluralsight.

"One of the things I was looking for was robust admin functions so we could assign learning paths, track progress to validate new skills acquired, and have leaderboards — and Cloud Academy offered all that," explained Farley.

Ultimately, Octo wanted to empower its employees to better support clients. That's when the company determined Cloud Academy would be an integral part of its skill-building initiatives.

SOLUTION

Using Cloud Academy, Octo is able to create Training Plans that align directly with its Centers of Excellence, areas of technical expertise that support Octo's mission to help clients modernize their most essential systems and software. Octo's five Centers of Excellence span areas such as cloud, DevSecOps, data science, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity, and Cloud Academy has enabled a standardized delivery model for learning across all of them.

With access to content ranging from beginner-level to advanced, Octo has established specific job categories with career growth. Managers are able to tailor assigned learning paths based on the employee's skill level and career goals, rather than having a one-size-fits-all solution for every employee in the same role.

"We're getting our employees to start thinking about, 'What is my next job? What skills do I need to get to that next job?' I'm hoping that what we've done is gone from simply training and learning, to establishing a cultural effort around continuous improvement." – James Farley

The next step for Octo in its talent management journey is to establish the Octo Leadership Academy. This will allow the team to focus on succession planning for executive teams by training the next wave of leadership, giving them the skills needed to succeed in their career progression. This is all based on creating a training model which incorporates employee performance, a technical roadmap, and the company's business strategy. The result is a well-defined growth pipeline that supports both employees looking to advance in their career, as well as the company's longer-term objectives.

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James Farley
Vice President of Enterprise Solutions

RESULTS

"We chose Cloud Academy based on the ease of use, the curated content within learning paths, and the ability to create our own custom content for our employees to consume," reported Farley. *"With all of the admin features available to us, we're able to easily manage progress and track the results of our training."*

Since partnering with Cloud Academy last year, James appointed Saya Sone as the Dean of Octo University. Saya oversees the day-to-day operations and ensures employees are gaining the right training at the right time. She works closely with their Cloud Academy Customer Success Manager to develop training plans, monitor usage and adoption, and ensure they get the most out of Octo's investment in talent management.

"I've been very happy with the partnership Saya and I have had with Cloud Academy over the past year, and I know we're getting pretty good usage and adoption with the tool," said Farley.

Looking ahead, Octo plans to onboard at least 50 more employees to the platform soon and begin utilizing Cloud Academy's Content Engine to create custom content. Specifically, the company looks forward to housing all of its company-specific policies and procedures — including its annual security training requirement, HR ethics compliance training, and more — within the platform. The plan is to use Cloud Academy as a central location for all training within the company, whether it's technical, compliance, HR, or something else. That way they can track completion through the Cloud Academy dashboard and confidently confirm who has completed what.

Two of Octo's biggest outcomes so far have been higher employee engagement and empowering employees to deliver better experiences for their clients regarding the cloud.

"Offering this as an employee benefit to anybody in the company provides continual learning to enhance their skill sets. The return is two-fold. Not only do our employees become more valuable to themselves and the company, but they become more valuable to their clients. This differentiates us. It sets us apart from every other company that is the same size." – James Farley

ABOUT CLOUD ACADEMY

Cloud Academy is the leading enterprise digital skills development platform accelerating innovation through guided Learning Paths, Hands-on Labs, and Skill Assessment. Companies trust Cloud Academy to deliver role-specific training on leading clouds (AWS, Azure, Google Cloud Platform), essential methodologies needed to operate on and between clouds (DevOps, security), and capabilities that are unlocked by the cloud (big data, machine learning, IoT).

Learn more at cloudacademy.com

ABOUT OCTO

Octo is a technology firm dedicated to modernizing the U.S. federal government's most critical systems and software. Octo employs a wide variety of capabilities and methodologies, focused largely around emerging technologies as a way of helping its customers jump the technology curve and focus on missions, not systems.

Learn more at octoconsulting.com